United Nations A/70/846–S/2016/379

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
26 April 2016

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventieth session
Agenda items 16, 34, 68, 70, 71 and 72

Culture of peace

Prevention of armed conflict

Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Right of peoples to self-determination

Promotion and protection of human rights

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Letter dated 22 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Republic of Armenia in relation to the Seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, to be held from 25 to 27 April 2016 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 16, 34, 68, 70, 71 and 72, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 22 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by Armenia in relation to the Seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

In the early hours of 2 April 2016, Azerbaijan unleashed large-scale offensive operations against Nagorno-Karabakh, thus violating trilateral agreements of 1994 on a ceasefire and of 1995 on the consolidation of the ceasefire, signed by Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, which do not have time limits. Azerbaijan has violated basic principles of international law and the decisions and declarations adopted by the Summits and Ministerial Councils of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), blatantly disregarding the statements of the Presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries — the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the French Republic — on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

From the very beginning of the Azerbaijani offensive, the civilian infrastructure and civilian population, including children and the elderly, became their intentional and indiscriminate targets. Among the first civilian victims were a 12-year-old boy who was killed in front of a school building as a result of a Grad missile attack and two other schoolchildren who were wounded.

Three elderly persons, including a 92-year-old woman, were brutally tortured, mutilated and killed. Moreover, three captive soldiers of the Nagorno-Karabakh armed forces were beheaded by Azerbaijani armed forces in ISIL style, which was subsequently celebrated in the towns and villages and publicized through social networks. Furthermore, during the exchange of bodies of the deceased between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, carried out through the mediation of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, it was registered that the bodies of the deceased transferred by the Azerbaijani side bore evidence of severe torture and mutilation.

Those barbaric acts of Azerbaijan, going beyond elementary norms of a civilized world, constitute violations of core international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context, it is also imperative to specifically mention the blatant violation by Azerbaijan of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which, inter alia, address groups exposed to specific risks, such as children, women and the elderly, and their additional protocols of 1977.

Azerbaijan demonstrates its total disregard for international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The persistent violations of human rights inside Azerbaijan and the consistent attacks on and imprisonment of its civil society representatives, the media and human rights defenders, coupled with the regular dissemination of intolerance and hatred against the Armenian people, provide a breeding ground for the criminal military adventurism of the Azerbaijani regime.

At the time of the gathering of the Seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the armed forces of Azerbaijan continue to violate the ceasefire, with new losses of human life. Since the beginning of the Azerbaijani aggression and to date as a result of Azerbaijan's aggression, hundreds have been killed and wounded, including civilians. This is a manifestation of the absurdity of celebrating a more peaceful and socially inclusive world and building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities in a country that is engaged in barbarity and killings a few hundred kilometres away from the venue of the Forum. This is an affront to the image and the integrity of the Alliance.

In this dire situation, the convening of the Seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations should have been cancelled in Azerbaijan, a country that grossly violates the very aims, principles and values of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Armenia is committed to the purposes of the Alliance of Civilizations and remains its friend. However, given the circumstances, Armenia does not join the consensus on the Declaration of the Seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Therefore, in the absence of consensus, the Declaration cannot be adopted.

Armenia rejects the Seventh Forum in its entirety, including its outcome.